11/11/66

Dear Mr. Fremont-Smith,

Gracious, how brilliant you are!(The Effect of Books). Dazzling! Illuminating as the aurora borealis at the equator! Your intellectual Judo is absolutely brown-belt!

Much of it is clear to me, like how the only book that has conclusions has none ("called for no specific action") , how "truthfulness"is measured, what is "acceptable" ("trustworthy, respectable, safe", although I concede this is a novel definite of stoolpidgeonry a la Wesley Liebeler), and what is "offensive". It is to your credit that you spell it out, and in the pages of the New York Times.

So significant is your analysis that I am confident Corbell will not complain that its masters thesis was awarded Harvard. Being both unmentionable and nonexistent, I have difficulty understanding whether you intend this for classification under "trustworthy, respectable, safe" or "truthfulness".

There are two things I believe the readers of the New York Times, if you will indulge my assumption of the critic's prerogative of self-appointment, would find illuminating. One is just how getting "some documents transferred to the National Archives", by which I understand you to mean something more than moving them from the west side of Seventh Street to the East side, "seems victory enough for a book" or for anything else. Tell us, please, how important it is that the national heritage is augmented by the addition of subscriptions blanks, unused, to "Life", Marina Oswald's sewing basket, child-care, cookery, embroidery, crocheting and sewing ("Simplicity") literature, two paperback editions of Ian Fleming and an absolutely elevating collection of Christmas and greeting cards, used and unused, with and without envelopes. Explain, as only you can, how ennobling it is that Mrs. Oswald's sewing basket contained a religious medal (in parenthesis, medal, religious), a Mexican coin and a nail file. Should your young hero be unable to supply you with the entire list (a situation less surprising than you might offhand consider), be my guest.

Then tell us how all this tremenduous influence was brought to bear by a book so rapidly abandoned by its hardback publisher and readers that it was being remaindered about two months after publication date and was actually available in paperback within three months.

There are other jewels of knowledge you could impart, like how "Inquest" was "attacking the Commission's findings" when it assumes all their basic assumptions and in that slight and well-lifted area outside this basic premise, according to the best expert, the author, before your articles appeared, is wrong.

As a fitting sequel to you articles on "The Effect of Books" may I suggest a series on "The Effect of Reviewers"?

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown, Md. 20734